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The University of Montana

NEWS RELEASE

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Sept. 29, 1994

UM FACULTY MEMBERS APPROVE NEW CONTRACT BY WIDE MARGIN

MISSOULA --

University of Montana - Missoula faculty members, who have been working without a contract for almost 15 months, voted nearly three-to-one Tuesday to approve an innovative new four-year contract that increases faculty salaries and workloads and sets specific goals for improving the education offered to UM students.

Faculty ratified the contract by a vote of 239 to 86. That approval margin -- 73.5 percent -- was wider than expected, said University Teachers Union President Richard Dailey.

"I feel very good about that," Dailey said. "It indicates that the faculty is going to get behind this and get it implemented."

UM President George Dennison also greeted the vote tally with great pleasure and said the administration, too, is resolved to work toward implementation of the contract's goals.

"What seems to me to be significant about this agreement is that it resulted from a collaborative process, and it will require even greater collaboration in the implementation," Dennison said. "This is a process that will involve faculty, staff, students and administration in coming up with the means to achieve the objectives. And the objectives are to get to competitive salaries for the faculty and to enhance the quality of the education that we provide to students."

The pact will now go to the state Board of Regents for approval. Commissioner of Higher Education Jeff Baker said he expects the Regents will vote on the contract late next week via

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conference call.

"I'm just delighted," Baker said Tuesday evening. "I'm delighted for the faculty. No agreement is perfect, but this has a lot of good things in it for everyone."

Collaborative negotiations began a year ago and included not only the UTU and the UM administration but representatives of the student body, the Governor's Office, the Commissioner of Higher Education, the Board of Regents and the state Legislature.

That broad-based approach to higher education contract negotiation is groundbreaking, Dennison said, noting, "There have been collaborative approaches in other states, but not involving as many stakeholders as we had."

The retroactive contract begins July 1, 1993 -- when the previous faculty contract expired -- and continues through June of 1997. The agreement reached by negotiators stretches for six years, through June of 1999, but the last two years of the agreement are not in contract form and may be subject to renegotiation.

The agreement aims to bring UM salaries closer to those at universities in states with similar per capita incomes by raising faculty salaries an average of 4.85 percent per year over six years. The pact also calls for establishing a quality and access fund to fund faculty proposals for innovative ways to enhance education at UM.

Goals set in the agreement include doubling the University's four-year graduation rate; increasing faculty instructional workload by about 20 percent over the plan's six-year span; reducing the percentage of students on academic probation; expanding class schedules to include Saturday and evening classes; and increasing funding for library acquisitions, computers and other equipment.

The plan will be funded by higher tuition, increased millage revenue and enrollment changes. No new state money is anticipated other than funds made available through the state pay plan.

Besides the many parties involved in the negotiations, the process had the benefit of two professional facilitators, William and Molly Hobgood of Whitefish, Dennison said. The couple donated their time during the long negotiations and were reimbursed only for their travel expenses.

"We're very much indebted to the Hobgoods," Dennison said. "Their assistance was invaluable."

Although the faculty vote brings to an end one very long process, it also marks the beginning of another period of intensive effort, Dailey said: "We know there'll be as much work in the next six months as in the past six months, in order to get the implementation process started."

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